BENGALURU, MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022 www.Bangaloremirror.com 12 Pages PRICE ₹3

Bangalore Mirror

TEMP Max 27 | Min 19 | Humidity 94% Generally cloudy sky Sensex 59,845 | Nifty 17,806 | Gold 54,561 | Silver 69,021 | Dollar 82.60 | Euro 88.11 | GBP 99.56

Why did BBMP select a firm that manufactures paper plates to train students appearing for CET?

THE PAPER PLATE TEST

Rs 1,84,00,000 paid to SR Industries for student coaching services: Audit report

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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

The findings of the annual audit report of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) suggest that the officials of the civic body were in a terrible hurry to select a coaching agency for pre-university (PU) students preparing for the Common Entrance Test (CET) and those students of commerce stream eager to learn the accounting software, Tally, and hone their accountancy skills.

The audit found an anomaly in the selection of the vendor for providing the aforementioned training to PU students at BBMP colleges.

As per the audit report (page numbers 194 and 195), the BBMP selected SR Industries that manufactures and distributes paper plates instead of choosing an institution with expertise in training students for CET and accounting software Tally. The BBMP paid Rs 1,84,00,000 to SR Industries for providing coaching for 142 students who were to appear for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 »

> "We wrote a letter to the BBMP on December 6, 2019, but they did not reply — Chief Auditor

PAGE 8

FOR BETTER OR METAVERSE

Will VR platform come out of cocoon or fail to woo netizens?

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3 THINGS TO DO

01 NYE Carnival

Mark your calendar for a 360-based new year celebration at Fortune Select Trinity Hotel in Whitefield. The Rio Carnival will be a perfect way to soak in the last of 2022 with friends and family. The event will take place in a massive Lawn and also has a pool area and children's corner. There will be food, beverages, music, and a host of surprises. For entertainment, there will be a celebrity DJ, a fashion show, dance performances, and a kids zone with nannies. Children can enjoy cartoons, slides, jumping pads, puppet shows, and much more. Tickets available on Bookmyshow.
When: December 31, 8 pm
Where: Fortune Select Trinity Hotel, Whitefield

02 Karaoke night

Want to show off your music skills? Have no musical interests but want to sing off tune hits with your best friends and have an unforgettable night? Whichever be the case, you can head to Marcopolo Café in Koramangala for a karaoke session. The event is on from December 25, 2022 to January 16, 2023, tickets for which can be purchased on Bookmyshow. You can buy a redeemable ticket and sing your heart out. Alcohol will not be served at the venue.
When: December 25, 2022 – January 16, 2023
Where: Marcopolo Café, Koramangala

03 Laugh out loud

If you've been feeling blue this winter, head straight to the Yuck Comedy Club in Indiranagar today. You can catch some of the city's beloved stand-up comedy artists trying out their new material! You can also avail 15 per cent off on your food bill while you laugh your time away. Whether you're heading solo, with family, or with friends, you are bound to have a great time. The event starts at 7 pm and tickets can be bought on Bookmyshow. **When: December 26**
Where: Yuck comedy club, Indiranagar

City gears up to usher in 2023

A woman pushing a cart of face masks and balloons in front of Vidhana Soudha on a cloudy day. Guidelines for NYE are expected to be out on Monday.

PIC: KAUSHIK JN

City spas get booked out as people look for soothing therapies ahead of new year

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New year, fresh you

Many spa centres had been shut during the last two years owing to the covid pandemic; several corporate firms are now gifting their employees a spa experience to unwind and relax

With people toiling hard every day without enough breaks, many wait for the winter breaks to go on long holidays or to party. However, this time, many individuals are opting to go for Spas and de-stressing themselves. Many spa and wellness centres have already been booked out for the new year as people are looking for a wellness retreat to relax.

Many spa centres had been shut during the last two years with the pandemic at its peak and lockdowns in place. Some people who had come from other countries and opened spa centres in the city had to shut shop and go back as their business was hard hit.

This year, the scenario is different. Most of the spas in the city are getting full bookings for people opting for different spa services. Corporate firms are also giving their employees spa vouchers.

Ashley James , GM , Angsana Oasis Spa & Resort, said, "People today want holistic breaks which are for their mind and body. Hence, combining a vacation or even a work trip with some therapy which helps them focus and relax is much in demand today. With the new year ahead, we are witnessing a surge in demand for spa services.

Most of the guests staying with us during this holiday season are pre-booking spa services when they check-in. As a result, unless booked in advance, slots are not available for walk-in customers." Spas help one to de-stress, enhance sleep, reduce headache, and also helps in relieving pain.

There are also beautifying benefits like radiant and supple skin. Spa centres are also appointing doctors as people are looking at spas for serious consultation. "We have an Ayurveda Practitioner who is also an in-house doctor. When it comes to Ayurveda, a doctor consultation is recommended to know the body type in order to select the right treatments," added James.

Many people are opting for relaxing back and neck messages, intense muscle therapy, and even oil messages. The idea for them is to relax their body and feel good.

Sonia J Banerjee, Director of Rooms at Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway, said, "There has definitely been an increase in the demand for spa services after covid cases dropped.

More and more guests are focusing on health and feel that if they want to be engaged happily during their stays, this is a constructive and beneficial way to be occupied.

> **"People today want holistic breaks which are for their mind and body. Hence, they are combining work trips with some therapy** – Ashley James, Angasana Oasis Spa & Resort

Hot stone massages, intense muscle release therapy, Abhyanga massage, jet lag cure - we have a range of massages that can be tailor-made for guests in terms of the duration, preference of natural oils, and so on.

For couples massages, our most popular treatment is 'time for tranquillity', and for singles we suggest a therapy called 'soothe your senses'."

What sort of power play is this, BESCOM?

Ejipura residents do not know why they are having to put up with frequent power cuts

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File photo of children studying in the candlelight during a power cut; frequent power cuts causing disturbance to students, professionals

The residents of Ejipura, 21st Cross, say that they are in the throes of despair due to the constant power cuts in their area. They say that it throws their daily schedules off track and causes inconvenience.

Many residents of the area who are working from home say that it has become difficult to do so because of the power cuts. Joshua K, a resident of the area, said, "I am extremely disturbed by the power cuts happening every day. Once the power goes, it does not come back for hours, and it gets very difficult to work in the middle of that. The wifi stops working and even the power banks give up after a while. Because of this, I have been forced to buy extra power banks so that I can work somehow. The situation is only getting worse."

Shruti Wadhwa, another resident, talked about how she has been inconvenienced. "There have been so many instances where my laptop switched off in the middle of my work because there was no charge in it. The power cut situation is causing a lot of problems at my work. I even had to take leaves and face pay cuts because of the power cuts. The worst thing is that it is not a one-time thing. It keeps happening every day."

The students staying in the area also face problems due to this. Sukriti Prakash, a student and a resident of the area, said, "It becomes very difficult for me to work on my assignments. Just yesterday, I was working on my final project, and I had to stay up late at night and finish it because there was no power in the afternoon and the submission of it was the next day so I had to finish it somehow."

> **"The water filter stopped working, so we had to order two cans of water so that we can use that instead of the filter. We are not even able to use the geyser. For two days straight, I had to take a bath in cold water in this freezing weather**

Ramya Kumar, another resident of the area said that even their daily schedule is affected. "The water filter stopped working, so we had to order two cans of water so that we can use that instead of the filter. We are not even able to use the geyser. For two days straight, I had to take a bath in cold water in this freezing weather."

The people using induction cookers are not even able to cook. Subodh Mahato, another resident of the area, said, "I use induction at my home for cooking but with these power cuts it is becoming impossible to use them. I have to wait for the power to come back so that I can cook and it gets very late when I finally finish cooking. Ordering out for one or two days is fine but I cannot do that every day. We have complained about this to the authorities, but this problem persists."

An official from BESCOM, assured BM that action would be taken soon. "We will get in touch with the department concerned," said the official.

Karnataka Contractors' Association president, 4 others arrested for levelling corruption charges against minister

Vyalikaval Police have arrested D Kempanna, the President of the Karnataka state unit of the Contractors' Association, who has recently levelled allegations against the state Horticulture and Planning Minister Munirathna Naidu charging that the minister demanded 40 per cent commission in contractual works. Kempanna along with four others have been arrested by Police in response to the defamation case filed by the minister.

Following the allegations, Minister Munirathna filed a 50 crore defamation case against Kempanna. A non-bailable arrest warrant was issued against him after the defamation case was filed by the Minister.

The 8th ACMM Court issued a non-bailable warrant against Kempanna on December 19 following which the police arrested him. Four office-bearers of the association have alson been arrested.

Nataraj, the Treasurer of the Contractors Association, Gurusiddappa, the Joint Secretary of the Association, and Krishna Reddy the Vice President of the Association are the three other office bearers who were arrested along with Kempanna. All of them had directly accused the state government minister of demanding a 40 percent commission. They were later granted bail.

Kempanna had also written a letter to the Prime Minister saying that the state government ministers have demanded a 40 percent commission in contractual works. Besides, contractors of Bengaluru and BBMP have alleged that the BBMP demands 50 percent commission from the contractors.

Munirathna said he had filed a criminal defamation case against 18 people who are with Kempanna. "If there is a document, release it and bring the officers and politicians who got the commission into the open," said Muniratna. Kempanna had said that they will be submitting all the documents to the court. **ANI**

CRIME FILES

Man dies after his bike rams into wall

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A man who was going on his bike to a Christmas celebration died after his bike rammed into a wall. The man, Alex, 25, was a resident of Rajajinagar. The incident took place near Cubbon Park police station.

According to the police, Alex was driving too fast and so he couldn't control the speed of his bike leading to the collision.

The man died on the spot due to severe head injuries, said the police.

"It appears that the bike was driven at high speed and recklessly and the collision occurred. Satish, the pillion rider of the bike, was also seriously injured. The victim was admitted to Bowring Hospital," said the police.

A case has been registered at Cubbon Park Traffic Police Station.

Plot to kill Cong leader

Three people have been arrested for plotting to kill Congress leader Altaf Khan on Saturday.

According to the police, an auto rickshaw stopped near Altaf Khan's house in Goripalya around 10 pm on Saturday. The people in the auto rickshaw waited for Altaf for a long time. However, Altaf did not come out of the house, so the gang was ready to leave.

However, police got the information about the gang and rushed to the spot. They immediately arrested the three men and seized their guns.

Drug peddler arrested

Banaswadi police have arrested a drug peddler in Bengaluru. The accused, PH Shabir, 26, of Thanisandra, was arrested for selling drugs in broad daylight. The police have seized Rs 2 lakh, 50 grams of MDMA and a two-wheeler.

Officials said that on December 23, around 1.45 pm, the accused was arrested, based on a tip-off that an unknown person was selling drugs to the public at Bus Stand Road, Ankappa Reddy Layout, Banaswadi.

The accused, who hails from Kerala, had come to the city four months ago to work as a taxi driver. He made friends with some drug peddlers in Kerala and Hennur and used to buy drugs at low prices. Later, he used to earn money illegally by selling drugs at high prices to acquaintances and customers. In this regard, a case under NDPS Act has been registered at Banaswadi Police Station.

Woman kills self

A 40-year-old woman is said to have died by suicide after she jumped from 19th floor of her apartment building. The incident took place under Thalaghattapura police station limits. The woman used to live at Purva Highland Apartment, Holiday Village resort road.

According to the police, she was suffering from depression. The body has been shifted to KIMS hospital.

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Don't go digging roads without prior approval

Kanakapura residents, BBMP go to cops over telecom agencies illegally digging up roads

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Although Kanakapura Road was asphalted just a few months ago, telecom providers came and started to dig up the streets in no time. Upon seeing the same, residents in the area started to raise complaints with the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), and through collective effort, an FIR was filed.

On December 20, in the middle of the night, the residents happened to notice telecom providers digging up the stretch between Sarakki and Nice road. When they intervened, asking the workers about their purpose, the latter stated that it was to lay underground telecom lines. The residents then asked them to leave as they did not have a permission letter. The following day, members from Changemakers of Kanakapura Road brought the issue to the Palike's notice.

"Many residents started to complain to the BBMP officials regarding the road being dug up. We contacted the major road infrastructure engineers and they were not aware of this. They said that they had not given permission for the road to be dug. They checked the spot and decided to take action," said VK Srivatsa, Secretary, Changemakers of Kanakapura. Another resident said, "Without any prior notice, agencies come and dig up roads. Safety is not taken care of either. They dig the road and leave it open, which can be a death trap for many. When we just started to feel better about the roads, we were disappointed again. The dug up portion is not even restored properly later. All the mud and stones are scattered in the middle of the road, which ends up being very risky for two-wheeler riders."

Residents in the area were surprised to find people digging up the road in the middle of the night without any authorisation

> **"Without any prior notice, agencies come and dig up roads. Safety is not taken care of either. They dig the road and leave it open** – Resident

After the BBMP checked the illegal digging, an official from RR Nagar zone filed an FIR at the Thalaghattapura police station on December 23. However, the BBMP were unaware about which telecom provider had carried out the digging. This is why they filed an FIR against four agencies. Meanwhile, police officials said they would investigate the case.

"A few months ago, a similar case happened where illegal digging was taken up. When we complained to BBMP, they only filed a Non cognizable report (NCR). This time, we made sure an FIR was filed and followed up with the Palike. The major roads in Kanakapura come under the jurisdiction of two zones - Rajarajeshwari Nagar and Bommanahalli zone.

We were thankful to the BBMP RR Nagar engineer for coming forward and taking stern action. Similarly, we would like the Bommanahalli zone BBMP officials to be active during such scenarios." added Srivatsa.

After filing the complaint, BBMP initiated fixing of the road themselves and have done patch work. They have decided to restore the dug up portion in an appropriate way in a few days.

BBMP officials were unavailable for comment.

'Push box' to ease travel from HAL Road

This project was delayed considerably because of issues relating to land acquisition

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The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) initiated a push box method for the first time, where an underpass built at the Marthahalli railway over bridge will ease commuting for thousands of citizens. While there was a delay in starting the work for over seven months, it is almost in the completion stage now.

The BBMP had initiated the push box method way back in March. The push box is a precast concrete box which is transported for installation. As building an underpass would take a lot of time, the BBMP officials came up with the idea of the push box which is much easier. The project was aimed for completion in three months from March, but there was a delay in starting work due to land acquisition issues.

Clement Jaykumar from the Mahadevpura Task Force said, "Since we had to make a new road for the underpass, there was a land acquisition issue which took time. Meanwhile, the place where we had to precast the frame was also on land that had to be acquired and the owners were not okay with it. After settlement of the land, we started to carry out work in the month of December."

In the first week of December, the Bengaluru Traffic Police issued directions for deviation of traffic for the construction of underpass. Traffic was diverted along Old Airport Road to one side of the Marathahalli bridge. The top surface of the underpass has been completed and vehicle movement is back to normal. The push box has been installed and 70 per cent of the work is completed.

Jaykumar said, "The work on service road and shifting of BWSSB pipelines has been pending and will be completed shortly. In the next 25 days, the entire work will be completed. The Ugly Indian Team (TUI) along with BBMP Officials will do a space transformation by beautifying the walls after the ground work is completed."

The underpass aims to ease traffic at Old Airport Road from Marthahalli, Munnekola, and Kundalahalli gate.

"Earlier, people coming from HAL and Marthahalli had to go through the Kundalahalli underpass and take a U-Turn and then join Outer Ring Road (ORR). Now, with the underpass, commute time will be reduced by 70 per cent. People currently spend 2 km extra commuting to reach ORR, but once the underpass is ready, it will take about 0.5 km," added Jaykumar.

After being delayed for seven months, work on the push box is now nearing completion

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Footpath blocked

Jayanagar

The footpath in Jayanagar 4th Block, 5th Main Road has been blocked by debris.

Dangerous fence

Nandini Layout

The barbed wire fence adjacent to the footpath near Reliance Mart in Nandini Layout is dangerous to pedestrians.

Encroachment

Koramangala

An encroachment on 16A Main Road, Koramangala, near Headstart School, is causing inconvenience to the public.

New platform, an alternative route for restaurants?

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With the introduction of Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a government-backed platform for e-commerce networks, in the city on a trial basis, small restaurants are expected to profit, say restaurateurs.

"So far, we have been doing business through private food aggregators, but with ONDC, it can be done through other sources as well. In that way, the cost would come down for restaurants and sellers," said Arun Adiga, owner of Vidyarthi Bhavan.

With lower commission costs for restaurants, consumers too are expected to see reduction in prices, the restaurants said.

"However, it is still a very new concept and we are at an initial stage. We cannot use the platform to deliver services directly and would need a seller app. So we are unsure how it might play out in the final stages. But, the concept is great and we are hoping it will be profitable," Adiga added.

The ONDC platform is expected to end the duopoly in Indian cities. As per reports, the platform would enable restaurants and sellers to access the data of end consumers, unlike private aggregators, who mask the data from restaurants.

"There are several players who are looking to enter the e-commerce platform for the food industry and we are also in the early stages of discussing

Eateries may have new options of connecting with customers

and exploring the possibility of how the restaurants can tie up with them and provide services to the consumers to the ONDC platform," Adiga explained further.

Recently, the Bruhat Bengaluru Hotel Association (BBHA) had a seminar in Bengaluru with the ONDC authorities including payment apps where various frameworks were discussed making this platform more profitable and functional. The ONDC platform has gone live in 16 pin codes across Bengaluru under the beta testing phase and is currently allowing consumers to place their orders in two domains - groceries and restaurants-through buyers' apps.

"ONDC is a parallel service provider by the Central government. It has already started services in different areas and regions around Bengaluru. PhonePe will be one of the payment apps supported on the platform and it will allow the restaurants to facilitate food delivery services through the platform," explained PC Rao, President of BBHA.

After the beta testing, they will discuss ways to start the services in Bengaluru, Rao added.

Data masking and the high cost of the commission have been one of the major problems faced by restaurants on the food-aggregator apps. The ONDC platform aims to 'democratise' e-commerce by eliminating the need for a central intermediary like food delivery aggregators or other delivery aggregators. Currently, the platform has been launched on a trial basis in Meerut and Bengaluru.

Spotlight on traffic offences

Traffic cops go after faulty number plates

Special drive to track down vehicles with altered or hidden number plates; 10 cases in 7 days

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If the number plate of your vehicle is faulty, now would be a good time to fix it. The Bengaluru traffic police is on a mission to make sure you do. They have started a drive and are catching riders with altered or hidden number plates.

In a conversation with Bangalore Mirror, Kuldeep Kumar R Jain, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Traffic west division, said that the department has formed special teams to catch these vehicles.

The DCP west also mentioned that 10 vehicles which had hidden or fake number plates have been caught in a span of seven days.

"There are no specific locations where these vehicles are caught, but mostly they can be found near colleges and educational institutions where there are young people. Most of the cases are of students who would not be wearing helmets or would be triple riding, so in order to avoid getting caught by the camera, they use fake number plates," he said.

Bangalore Mirror
Clearing the jam on our roads
An eye out for footpath parking
Caught on cam: 14,000 traffic violations a day

BM had earlier reported about measures taken by traffic police to crack down on footpath parking

Some of the seized vehicles with defective number plates

Dip in defective number plates

The city has recorded 3,68,361 cases of defective number plates in 2022. The cases have seen a dip from last year, when 4,56,521 cases were recorded.

The police are now identifying areas after receiving information and keeping a watch on such vehicles.

"We are getting information from different channels that in certain areas defective number plate vehicles are parked. So, we are trying to track it down. After we catch a vehicle, we put a wheel clamp on it and would sometimes call the parents of these students. We then give them a proper warning, collect a fine and then we release the vehicle," added Kuldeep.

The fine for using defective number plates in the city is Rs 500, said the police. The traffic police are now focusing on AI-equipped CCTV cameras to register traffic violations.

> **"There are no specific locations where these vehicles are caught, but mostly they can be found near educational institutions and offenders are young people** –Kuldeep Jain, DCP Traffic

However, because the number plate of some vehicles is not visible it becomes difficult to find them.

"The technology can work only when there is proper input. If the number plate is upside down or hidden, it is difficult to identify the vehicle. We do use cameras to find out which are the areas with the maximum number of such defective number plate cases. But the system can't produce an outcome to certain vehicles because the plates are defective in nature," said Kuldeep.

The High Court too had in the past ordered the removal of number plates that are faulty.

Those displaying unauthorised names, symbols and names of associations on the registration plates of all vehicles of government departments, boards, and non-governmental organisations were also to be removed.

1 crore: Crackdown figure in 2022

Of all the cases booked, 789,662 cases were contact-based, which means booked by traffic police personnel

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Bengaluru traffic police has registered 1 crore cases against vehicle users in the city over the last one year.

"We have booked almost 1 crore cases for 1 crore vehicles. And that is the reason why we have been able to reduce traffic accidents this year," said MA Saleem, Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic).

According to the traffic police data, 8,821,212 cases were booked contactless, while 789,662 cases were contact-based bookings. The police also recorded 3,334 towing cases in 2022. The police have collected a fine of Rs 1,740,419,090 from all the cases booked this year.

Officials say that most of the cases registered are from the outskirts of Bengaluru.

"As far as the enforcement is concerned, we have booked so many cases, in fact no other city in the world has booked so many cases. Most of the cases are recorded in Bengaluru rural areas. We have far more enforcement in the CBD regions so that helps in reducing the traffic violations. But in the outskirts, there are less police personnel," said Saleem.

According to the data by traffic police, there are 57,30,388 two-wheeler vehicles in the city as of July 2019, which contributes to 69.43% of the total vehicle population. Apart from that, the second largest contributor to the vehicle population is light motor vehicles, which comprises 22.40% of the total population.

"The increase in the number of cases recorded is directly proportional to the number of increasing vehicles in the city. So, there is an increase in vehicle population but the roads are not expanding which leads to chaos and traffic violations," said MN Anucheth, Jt. Commissioner of Police, Traffic.

Day of devotion, and prayer

Devotees offer special prayers for Christmas and light candles at the Infant Jesus church in Viveknagar on Sunday

Anomaly in BBMP vendor selection

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

CET alongside Tally training for 2,050 students, in the year 2018. There are 15 PU colleges in the city maintained by the BBMP. Around 4,400 students were in 15 PU colleges in the year 2018. Among them, 142 students were eligible to attend CET coaching classes and 2,050 students were eligible to learn Tally software.

The audit also found SR Industries did not attach the copy of the licence with the application submitted to the Palike while applying for the contract. It stated that the BBMP order issued on December 11, 2018 did not specify the mode of selection of the students appearing for the CET and Tally training, and the names of PU colleges that have eligible students for the aforesaid training. "We have sought an explanation: on what basis did the BBMP okay the proposal submitted by SR Industries on fixation of the amount for providing coaching for PU students. We wrote a letter to the BBMP authorities concerned on December 6, 2019, but they did not reply to the letter," the BBMP chief auditor said in the report.

As per the audit report, the BBMP paid Rs 10,475 to SR Industries as tuition fees for each student - in a total of 142 students - who attended CET coaching classes and Rs 8,300 as a tuition fees to the same company for each student (in a total of 2,050 students) who attended the Tally software classes.

The audit report further stated that there were no details on the duration of the training, student attendance and distribution of certificates to the students. The report termed the tender floated for inviting the bids to provide coaching for students appearing for CET and providing training in Tally software as 'illegal'. "The tender did not have the details on the duration of the coaching classes. The tender process itself is illegal," the audit report stated.

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Losing a decade

Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah urged everyone to lead a healthy lifestyle. Speaking at a programme, Siddu gave his own example. "When I was a youngster, I neglected my lifestyle and now I have turned diabetic. Somehow, I have managed this and am still strong at 76th year. I want to live longer but now I don't know how many years I will live. I am told that the life term reduces by 10 years if one becomes diabetic. Hence, I want to tell everyone that prevention is better than cure," he said.

Tipplers' demands

The Tipplers' Association had recently organised a press conference to convey their demands to the State Government. At the conference, the association members said that the government should provide them with a lot of sops as it is earning 30% of its revenue due to tipplers. "As we are scared of losing our lives due to excessive drinking, the government should provide at least Rs 1 lakh term insurance to our families in case of deaths. Secondly, many of the kids cannot study at home as we drink. So, there needs to be a 10% reservation at hostels for children of tipplers. Thirdly, the government should constitute a corporation exclusively for tipplers which can construct 1 lakh houses every year. Fourthly, as many tipplers undergo liver surgery due to excessive drinking and these surgeries may cost up to Rs 4 lakh, we need reimbursement from the government. The government should conduct periodic health check up camps for tipplers. Last but not least, bars should ensure that they will provide pure drinking water to tipplers," said the association members.

Sporty netas

Many politicians are good at sports and they occasionally show their skills during inauguration events. A few months back, Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar showed how he can hit sixes during a practice match. Now, it Arsikere MLA KM Shivalinge Gowda has turned sporty. Gowda, who always wears a dhoti, showed that he was a good Kabbadi player as he played the game during the inauguration of rural games. And Minister for Cooperation and Mysuru District-in charge ST Somashekar showed he can shake a leg as he was seen immersed in dancing to a folk song during the Maagi Utsav in Mysuru.

Game of marbles

As G Janardhana Reddy was announcing his new political party, a journalist asked him whether he was considering politics as a game of marbles. Reddy said, "Well, the game of marbles is quite important for politicians as it teaches you to aim well. In fact, I also know how to swim as well and this is the reason why I could escape from the conspiracies hatched by my political adversaries. As far as the marble game is considered, I want to tell you that I have never lost a game of marble when I was a kid and now I am sure I will not lose any political game as well." — **Sridhar Vivan**

27 districts report zero covid cases

State's recovery rate is 98.97% at present; there are no reports of ICU patients

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Although there has been minimal increase in the test positivity rate (TPR), the covid case load in the state is quite low. According to Sunday's health bulletin, the state reported 22 fresh covid cases, out of which 19 were from Bengaluru and one each from Mysuru, Udupi, and Shivamogga. One death was reported.

The state's TPR was 0.88 per cent as against 0.8 per cent last week. The recovery rate is 98.97 per cent. There are four patients being treated for covid, and all of them are in general. There are no patients in the ICU or on ventilators. Vaccination is slowly picking up with 3,131 citizens receiving the jab, including 1,087 in Bengaluru.

City folks wear face masks and step out for shopping in Church Street (File photo)

Mask Mandate

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said, "We will take stock of the situation during Monday's meeting. New Year's Eve is a crowd puller in Bengaluru and we need to take a lot of precautions. The Centre has already given us guidelines. I don't think we will take any big decisions, but we will definitely assess the situation. I want to reiterate that there is no need to panic. The surge is seen in 10 countries, but there is nothing to worry here currently. However, we cannot forget the fact that there can be a possibility of recurrence. Sometimes, the spread may happen in two or three months after a surge elsewhere. Those eligible should get their booster doses."

Fresh guidelines today?

A meeting will be held in Belagavi on Monday to discuss the New Year's guidelines. Reacting to this, Sudhakar said, "Monday's meeting will take stock of the situation. Right now, I can't say whether we will issue fresh guidelines or not." Chief Minister Basavaraj S Bommai said, "As announced earlier, there will be a meeting of ministers on Monday to discuss guidelines for the New Year. All I want to say is that there is no need to panic as of now."

No lockdown

Clarifying that there is no proposal to impose any stringent measures like lockdown, Sudhakar said, "There is no such plan as economic activities are returning to normalcy. There is a robust growth and there is no question of curbing that. When there was an outbreak in 2020, we didn't have any experience and there were no vaccines. However, we have learnt a lot since then. Now, we need to learn to live with covid. The BF7 variant was reported in our country earlier. We know that it is contagious, but we need to watch out for severity. I have asked experts to submit a report."

> **"The Centre has already given us guidelines. I don't think we will take any big decisions, but we will definitely assess the situation**
>
> – Dr K Sudhakar, Health Minister

Dues of private hospitals uncleared

Private hospitals say that they are ready to work with the government, but want dues settled at the earliest.

A member of the Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes association (PHANA) said, "Private hospitals have treated patients who were sent under government quota in the last two years. However, many are yet to receive 25 to 30 per cent of dues." The government recently asked private hospitals to start reserving beds for covid. patients.

Janardhana Reddy floats new political party

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Breaking his ties with the saffron party, former BJP minister G Janardhana Reddy announced a new party, Kalyana Rajya Pragati Paksha, on Sunday. Reddy who had earlier made Ballari as his bastion has now announced moving to the neighbouring Gangavathi. He said that his party will make its debut in the state's general elections scheduled for next year.

Reddy has been making political moves for a while. He had shifted to a new house in Gangavati and has been visiting a number of temples. Many BJP leaders had tried to convince him against the 'new party' move, but Reddy stood his ground. Addressing a press conference on Sunday, he said, "I want to clarify that despite BJP seniors maintaining a distance from me, many thought that I was still a part of BJP. Today, I want to tell everyone that I will be starting a new party. There has been a lot of hate politics in the state and my party will put brakes on it. I will tour the entire state in the coming days to strengthen my party. I will definitely contest in the next elections from Gangavathi. Even my name has been registered in the electoral rolls from Gangavathi."

All eyes are on Reddy's close associate at one point, B Sriramulu. Earlier, when Reddy was imprisoned, Sriramulu had quit BJP and started a new political party-BSR Congress. However, the party was later merged with the BJP. For a while, both of them have not been seeing eye to eye. Even during Reddy's grandchild's ceremony, Sriramulu was conspicuously missing. Now, Reddy has said that he was not forcing Sriramulu to join his party. Reacting to this, Sriramulu said, "I have tried my best to convince Reddy against a new party. Reddy is an intelligent man and will take a wise decision. I want to clarify that I am in BJP and work for my party and there is no chance of joining Reddy's party".

Reddy also said that he was not forcing any of his brothers to join his new political outfit.

Experts call public exams for class 5,8 pointless

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The announcement made by Education Minister BC Nagesh regarding conducting public examinations for students of classes 5 and 8 who are studying state syllabus has received backlash from parents as well as educationists. Even though no student will fail in this examination, educationists believe that this move is completely unnecessary and they want it to be rolled back.

Dr Niranjanaradhya, a development educationist said that educationists are not being able to understand the importance of the examination for classes 5 and 8. "My response is based on the RTE and research. He (Nagesh) says that his intention to conduct this examination is to know where children are in terms of learning. However, there is already a huge amount of data available in the schools about where the children are in terms of learning.

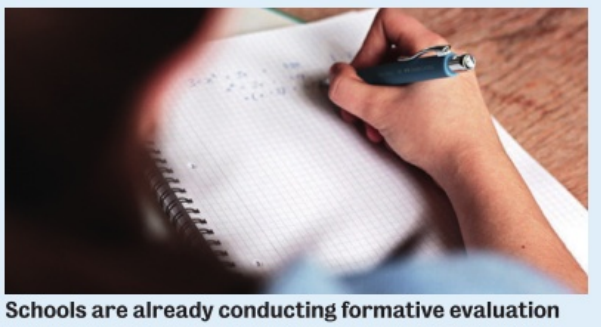
The schools have already conducted formative evaluation and those records are available with the schools and the same has been uploaded in the Student Achievement Tracking System (SATS) portal. So, when such vast data is available, what is the need for conducting another examination with a centralised question paper?"

He added that anything in terms of a centralised question paper is a universal public examination, but the education minister claimed that it is not a public examination.

> **"There is already a huge amount of data available in schools about where children are in terms of learning. What is the need for this?**
>
> – Dr Niranjanaradhya, educationist

The minister also said that many children are dropping out. When it comes to the right to education, the intention of it is to remove fear and anxiety by following a child-centric approach, and comprehensive and continuous evaluation not only evaluates them once a year or in an hourly basis, but comprehensively, ie scholastic and non-scholastic dimensions of their learning, continuously.

"When such a system is there, on what grounds is the minister making such a statement? The world is moving away from this standardised mode of testing and people are adopting a more school-based evaluation method in a more scientific manner. Why should one move back to the old system of conducting a three-hour examination and judging children? It is completely unscientific," said Dr Niranjanaradhya.



Schools are already conducting formative evaluation

 # STEM expert
Indian-origin scientist Parwinder Kaur appointed to STEM expert panel in Australia

For better or metaverse

Will virtual reality platform come out of its cocoon or fail to woo netizens?

Metaverse — the most used tech buzzword of the year — has failed to gain the attention of the masses to date. Will it become useful in our daily lives in 2023 as companies spend billions on virtual reality/augmented reality (VR-AR) related technologies?

Meta (formerly Facebook), which sacked 11,000-plus staffers in 2022, is struggling to gain and keep users on its social virtual reality (VR) platform Horizon Worlds -- its biggest bet to fulfil its $10-billion metaverse dream.

Apple CEO Tim Cook has said that while many tech companies are bullish on metaverse, he is not sure if the average person can understand what metaverse actually is. However, the industry is still bullish on metaverse. According to reports, the global metaverse market is expected to reach $996 billion in 2030, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 39.8 per cent.

The metaverse market size reached a value of $22.79 billion in 2021, according to GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

"As India gears up to become among the world's fastest growing economies in 2023, the months to come will be crucial towards setting the stage for our long term success," Prativa Mohapatra, Vice President and Managing Director, Adobe India, told IANS.

2022 sparked mega trends like the cryptocurrency boom and bust, increasing examples of the power of Generative AI, and the emergence of incredible use cases on what could be metaverse's long-term journey to making real impact in the world. "With such fast-paced trends governing with the dynamics of the industry and customer experiences in 2023, businesses will need to continuously adapt to changes, evolve strategies, and be laser focused on looking around the corner to drive innovations that can create an impact," Mohapatra added.

"Although it is in the early stages of development, it has the potential to be the next mega-theme in digital media

Various players in the technology sector, including those manufacturing semiconductors, components, and application software, have started leveraging metaverse.

According to Deepak Agarwal, Project Manager at GlobalData, metaverse is still largely conceptual but could transform how people work, shop, communicate, and consume content. "Although it is in the early stages of development, it has the potential to be the next mega-theme in digital media," said Agarwal. In 2023 and beyond, the basic building blocks for consumer metaverse along with its potential killer use cases will continue to get refined, said experts.

"Enterprise Metaverse will continue to gain traction in 2023. Enterprises will seek to build efficiency gains and battle unsustainable black swan events," Prabhu Ram, Head-Industry Intelligence Group, CMR, told IANS.

With digital twins, for instance, Indian manufacturing enterprises have been able to monitor, map and manage supply chain and production plants remotely, he added. Meta in November had announced that it is supporting industry body FICCI with $1 million for the XR Open Source (XROS) fellowship programme that will help 100 developers working on XR (extended reality) technologies for the future of metaverse. Run by FICCI, the XROS programme will provide developers fellowships which includes stipend and mentoring.

The National e-Governance Division, an initiative of the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), will be the technical partner to the programme. "The vision for India can only be achieved when the young developers and start-ups, including, contribute to enabling future technologies," said Ajay Kumar Sood, Principal Scientific Advisor to the government.

In 2021, Meta partnered with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to bring immersive technologies to over 10 million students and 1 million educators over the next three years. **–IANS**

Time for 'cockroaches, not unicorns'

Thousands lost jobs amid deepening funding winter in 2022 as massive layoffs by the tech companies this year alone surpassed the levels from the Great Recession of 2008-2009 that began with Lehman Brothers collapse.

In 2008, tech companies laid off about 65,000 employees, and a similar number of workers lost their livelihoods in 2009, according to data by Challenger, Gray & Christmas. By comparison, over 1,000 tech companies laid off over 1,52,000 workers this year globally.

Over 17,000 tech employees were shown the door in India, led by edtech companies like BYJU's, Unacademy, Vedanta and others.

The startup ecosystem's funding winter could last another 12 to 18 months and the industry may face "a lot of turmoil and volatility", Flipkart CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy has warned.

The fact is that only two startups in India, Shiprocket and OneCard, attained unicorn status (valuation of $1 billion and above) in the July-September period, according to a PwC India report.

"There was a definite downturn in Q2 of this year and the quality deal flow had dried up substantially, as investors at large were wary of deploying dry powder," said Rushit Shah, CoFounder of DevX Venture Fund.

According to Shrijay Sheth, Founder, legalwiz.in, 2023 will continue to be the year of sustenance for most, and funders will continue to remain more cautious.

"Both valuation multipliers and funding opportunities will go more conservative. Startups must build better units economics as opposed to expensive acquisitions driven growth channels," said Sheth.

Geo-political issues, global supply chain crisis and other macro issues are expected to prevail.

India saw a massive 35 per cent drop in funding this year, from $37.2 billion in 2021 to $24.7 billion. Edtech startups witnessed a significant 39 per cent drop compared to the same period last year, according to Tracxn.

The late-stage investments fell by 45 per cent, from $29.3 billion in January-November 2021 to $16.1 billion for the same period this year.

According to Yash Shah, Co-founder and CEO, Clientjoy, 'growth at all costs' is no longer a philosophy entertained by investors. "The market will turn eventually and disciplined founders and top talent will reap disproportionate benefits once this funding winter is over. This is the time for cockroaches and not unicorns," said Shah. **–IANS**

BITS & BYTES

FAKE NEWS: MUSK

Twitter CEO Elon Musk has denied that the micro-blogging platform removed suicide prevention feature for its users, said the reports were "fake".

Media reports earlier claimed that Twitter removed a feature that promoted suicide prevention hotlines and other safety resources.

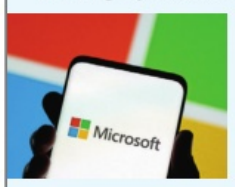
"False, it is still there," the new Twitter owner said in a tweet. The reports, quoting Twitter executives, claimed the feature was removed and was being revamped.

Replying to a user, Musk said: "Twitter doesn't prevent suicide". "The message is actually still up. This is fake news," he added. The disappearance of the #ThereIsHelp banner, even if it was only momentary, led to criticism of Twitter from some consumer safety advocates, report Engadget. **–IANS**

LEAKED BY MISTAKE

An employee of the American tech giant Microsoft has accidentally announced that Windows 11's Notepad app is getting a tabs feature.

According to The Verge, an American technology news website, a photo of a version of Notepad with tabs was shared by the employee, a senior product manager at Microsoft.



"Notepad in Windows 11 now has tabs!" he enthusiastically announced with a loudspeaker emoji.

The screenshot included a Microsoft internal warning: "Confidential Don't discuss features or take screenshots." It suggested that Microsoft's tabs feature is still in early internal testing.

Minutes later the tweet was deleted but not before Windows Central and several Windows enthusiast Twitter accounts had spotted it. **– ANI**

GO DRONE!

Drone manufacturer Garuda Aerospace has received the Type Certification and RPTO (Remote Pilot Training Organisation) approvals from the Director General of Civil Aviation for the indigenously designed kisan drones, the company said on Sunday.

DGCA Type certification is provided on the basis of the quality check and is issued after a rigorous testing process of the unmanned aerial vehicles.

The kisan drones are developed for agricultural purposes and with the Type Certification received for the GA-AG model, Garuda Kisan drones were eligible for Rs 10 lakh unsecured loans from the agri-infrastructure fund offered by the Centre, the company said in a statement. **PTI**

HEALTH TIP: Smokers have greater health risks because of their tobacco use, but nonsmokers also are at risk when exposed to tobacco smoke

Some of the best ways to manage stress are to find support, connect socially, and get plenty of sleep

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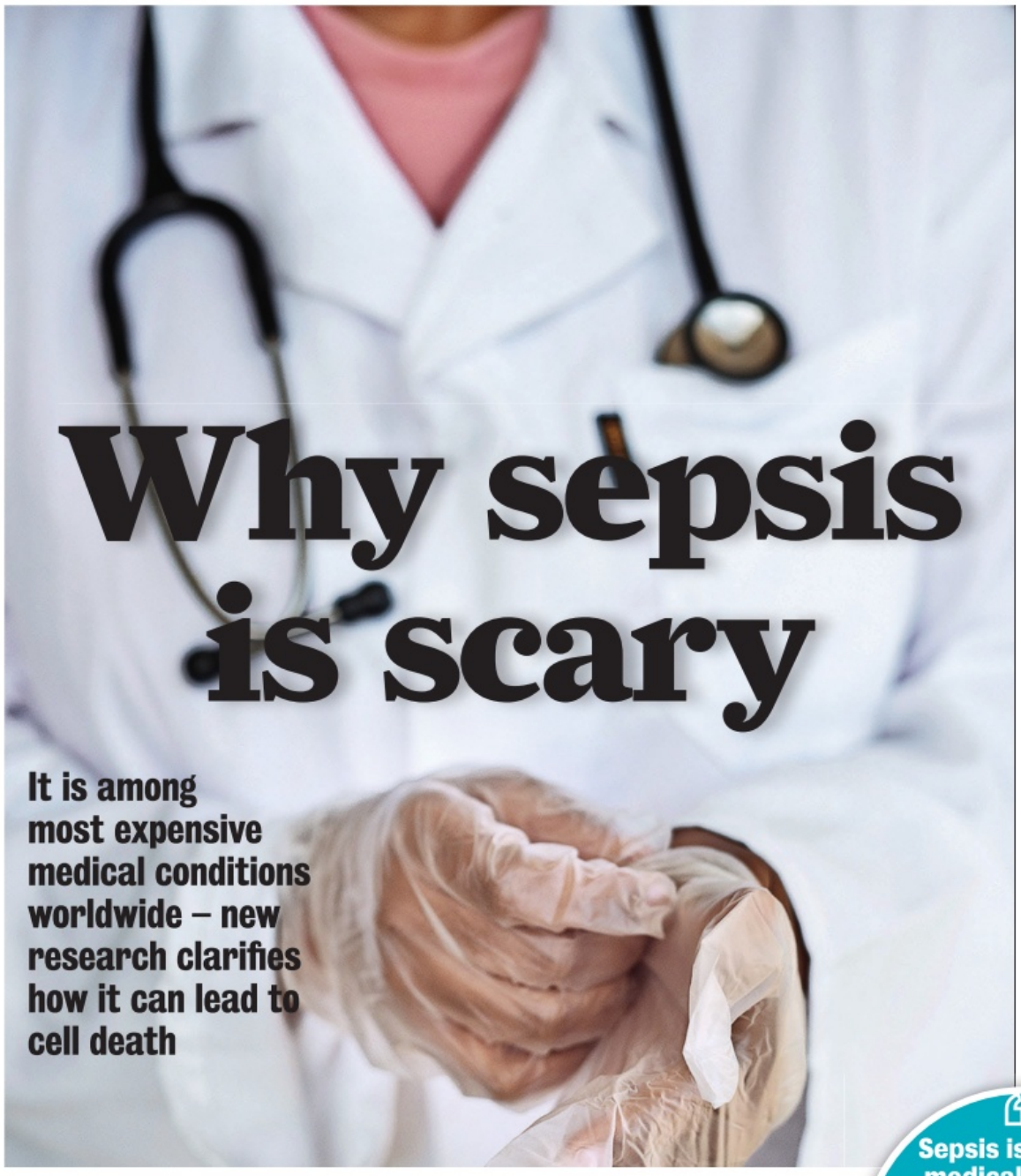


Why sepsis is scary

It is among most expensive medical conditions worldwide – new research clarifies how it can lead to cell death

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition arising from the body's overreactive response against an infection, leading it to injure its own tissues and organs. The first known reference to "sepsis" dates back more than 2,700 years, when the Greek poet Homer used it as a derivative of the word "sepo," meaning "I rot."

Despite dramatic improvements in understanding the immunological mechanisms behind sepsis, it still remains a major medical concern, affecting nearly 50 million people globally each year. Sepsis accounted for 11 million deaths worldwide in 2017.

We are researchers who study how certain types of bacteria interact with cells during infections. We wanted to understand exactly how an overreactive immune response can result in detrimental and even lethal effects like sepsis. In our newly published research, we discovered the cells and molecules that potentially trigger death from sepsis.

TNF in autoimmunity and sepsis

The body's response to infection starts when immune cells recognize components of the invading pathogen. These cells then release molecules like cytokines that help eliminate the infection. Cytokines are a broad group of small proteins that recruit other immune cells to the site of infection or injury.

While cytokines play an essential role in the immune response, excessive and uncontrolled cytokine production can lead to a dangerous cytokine storm associated with sepsis. Cytokine storms were first seen in the context of graft versus host disease, arising from transplant complications. They can also occur during viral infections, including covid. This uncontrolled immune response can lead to multi-organ failure and death.

Among the hundreds of cytokines that exist, tumor necrosis factor, or TNF, stands tall as the most potent and the most studied for nearly the past 50 years.

Tumor necrosis factor owes its name to its ability to induce tumor cells to die when the immune system is stimulated by a bacterial extract called Coley's toxin, named after the researcher who identified it over a century ago. This toxin was later recognized to be lipopolysaccharide, or LPS, a component of the outer membrane of certain types of bacteria. LPS is the strongest known trigger of TNF, which, once on alert, aids in the recruitment of immune cells to the infection site to eliminate invading bacteria.

In normal conditions, TNF promotes beneficial processes such as cell survival and tissue regeneration. However, TNF production must be tightly regulated to avoid sustained inflammation and continuous proliferation of immune cells. Uncontrolled TNF production can lead to the development of rheumatoid arthritis and similar inflammatory conditions.

In infection conditions, TNF must also be tightly regulated to prevent excessive tissue and organ damage from inflammation and an overactive immune response. When TNF is left uncontrolled during infections, it can lead to sepsis. For several decades, studies of septic shock were modeled by investigating responses to bacterial LPS. In this model, LPS activates certain immune cells that trigger the production of inflammatory cytokines, in particular TNF. This then leads to excessive immune cell proliferation, recruitment and death, ultimately resulting in tissue and organ damage. Too strong of an immune response is not a good thing.

Researchers have shown that blocking TNF activity can effectively treat numerous autoimmune diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and inflammatory bowel disease. Use of TNF blockers has dramatically increased in the past decades, reaching a market size of roughly $40 billion.

However, TNF blockers have been unsuccessful in preventing the cytokine storm that can arise from covid infections and sepsis. This is in part because exactly how TNF triggers its toxic effects on the body is still poorly understood despite years of research.

How TNF can be lethal

Studying sepsis might provide some clues as to how TNF mediates how the immune system responds to infection. In acute inflammatory conditions such as sepsis, TNF blockers are less able to address TNF overproduction. However, studies in mice show that neutralizing TNF can prevent the death of the animal from bacterial LPS. Although researchers do not yet understand the reason for this discrepancy, it highlights the need for further understanding how TNF contributes to sepsis.

Blood cells made in the bone marrow, or myeloid cells, are known to be the major producers of TNF. So we wondered if myeloid cells also mediate TNF-induced death.

First, we identified which particular molecules might offer protection from TNF-induced death. When we injected mice with a lethal dose of TNF, we found that mice lacking either TRIF or CD14, two proteins typically associated with immune responses to bacterial LPS but not TNF, had improved survival.

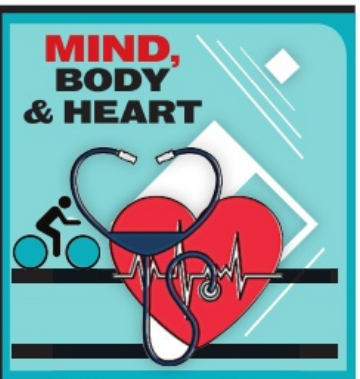
> **Sepsis is a major medical concern affecting nearly 50 million people globally each year; sepsis accounted for 11 million deaths worldwide in 2017**

This finding parallels our earlier work identifying these factors as regulators of a protein complex that controls cell death and inflammation in response to LPS.

Next, we wanted to figure out which cells are involved in TNF-induced death. When we injected a lethal dose of TNF in mice lacking the two proteins in two specific types of myeloid cells, neutrophils and macrophages, mice had reduced symptoms of sepsis and improved survival. This finding positions macrophages and neutrophils as major triggers for TNF-mediated death in mice.

Our results also suggest TRIF and CD14 as potential treatment targets for sepsis, with the ability to both reduce cell death and inflammation.

Alexander (Sasha) Poltorak and Hayley Muendlein, Tufts University (The Conversation)



All problems solved

Dear Coleen

I just can't get over a guy who lives in my neighbourhood. For a couple of years now I have found myself attracted to him. He is everything you could want in a man - handsome beyond measure, a loving father and he has a respectable career.
I have no interest in dating other men because I can't get him out of my mind. He is married, but the marriage isn't a happy one. His wife is dull, wears dowdy clothing and mothers him by baking him cakes and making him the same packed lunch. He finds her boring and her only ambition is having more children.
He has no idea of my feelings for him, but one night, when I went to the shop, he was coming out and he winked at me, which made me go weak at the knees.
He has told me he is unhappy in his marriage, but what do I do? Keep my feelings to myself or tell him I hope he will leave his wife?

COLEEN SAYS

I'm struggling to work out from your letter how well you actually know this man. On the one hand, he seems like a distant figure, living in the same neighbourhood, who's winked at you once, yet you say he's confided in you that his marriage isn't happy. Regardless of how friendly you are, of course you should keep your feelings to yourself because he's married with children.
Also, do you really want to be thought of as a home wrecker? It also strikes me that you've put your life on hold for two years for a man who's never given you any indication that he likes you, other than a wink! Finally, you're not very nice about his wife. As you might find out one day, motherhood is hard work and maybe her family is her priority.
If her husband isn't grateful, I hope she leaves him and finds someone appreciative.
—Coleen Nolan, Daily Mirror

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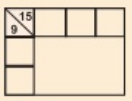
SOLVE IT IN A MINUTE

What is the number which when multiplied by 2 and 8 added to it gives the same result as when it is divided by 2 and has 32 added to it?

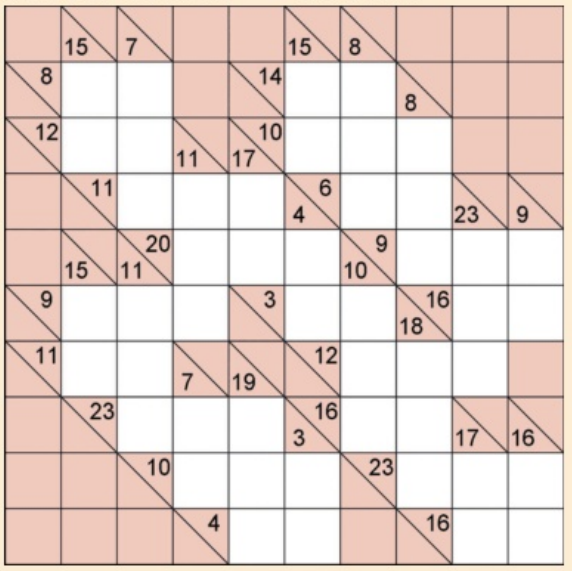
Kakuro

The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas

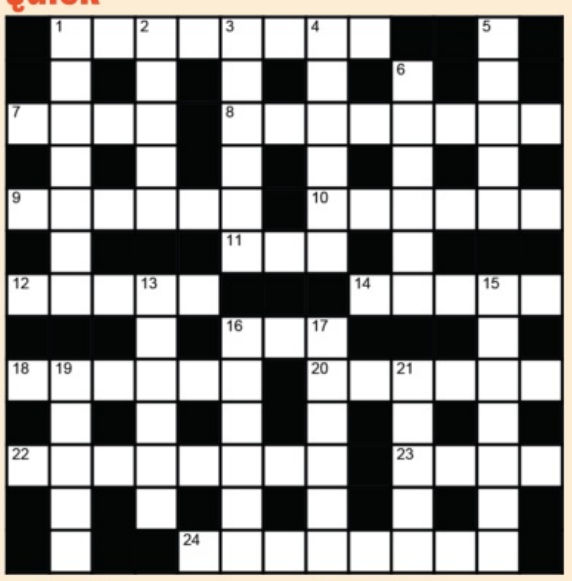


for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.

Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



Quick



ACROSS

1 Cosmetic surgery (8)
7 Able was I, ___ __ saw Elba? (3,1)
8 ____ Memorial Hall: Venue for plays and musical performances in Kodandarampura (8)
9 Cause to vanish (6)
10 Travelled around (6)
11 A cathedral town of Cambridgeshire (3)
12 Wading bird (5)
14 Writing tables (5)
16 LP successors (3)
18 A long narrow excavation in ground (6)
20 Larynx site (6)
22 Disclosed or made known (8)
23 Belgian river (4)
24 Lawyer (8)

DOWN

1 Subatomic particle–"fine ROM" anagram (7)
2 Sound like a bird? (5)
3 Scene of an event (6)
4 Lacking cordiality (6)
5 Fit with glass (5)
6 Charge or command solemnly (6)
13 Young male horses (6)
15 Dishonesty (7)
16 Swiss cottage (6)
17 Artist's workshop (6)
19 Staggers (5)
21 Artificial silk (5)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: U EQUALS Y

DV UZH'NA MIZPAG XWA AEEB, UZH BWZHQC KOPA XWA ZKAQAXXA.

Linemaro

Would you grab my arm so I can tell my friends I've been touched by an angel?

Mindchow

Insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different results

Joke of the day

Everyone should be able to do one card trick, tell two jokes, and recite three poems, in case they are ever trapped in an elevator

Loop

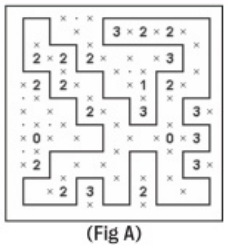
Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

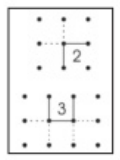
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

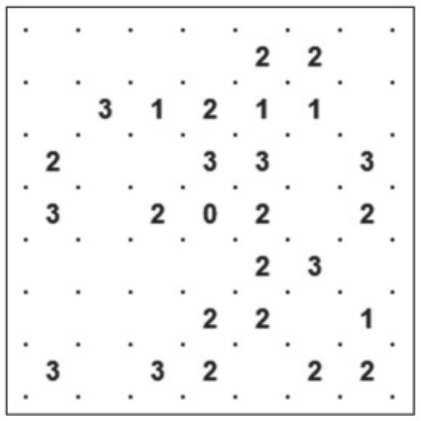
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



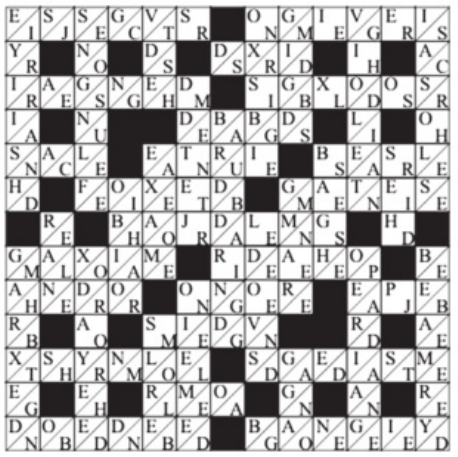
(Fig A)



(Fig B) Not Allowed



Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...

1 A	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8				
9				

ACROSS

1 To Oaf; 6 Pa pop; 7 Inert; 8 Taped; 9 Dunes

DOWN

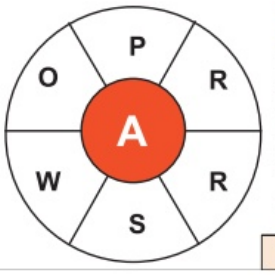
1 A pain; 2 Found; 3 Toped; 4 O peep; 5 Start

Mensapuzzle

Find the starting point and work from letter to adjoining letter horizontally and vertically, but not diagonally, to spell out a 12-letter word. You have to provide the missing letters.

S	I	P	Y
E	A	R	
	O	R	T

Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

08 Average; **09** Good; **11** Outstanding

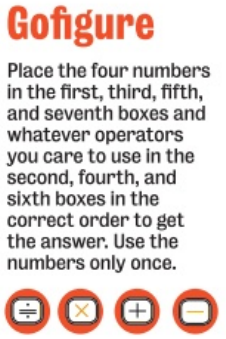
SudokuChallenge

	2		9		7			
	6						3	1
		1			8	5		
4		8		2				6
			6		1			
1				9		2		3
		9	4			8		
2	3						4	
			1		9		7	

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.



Easy = 7
1 4 5 9

Medium = 15
1 3 4 9

Hard = 24
2 5 6 4

Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

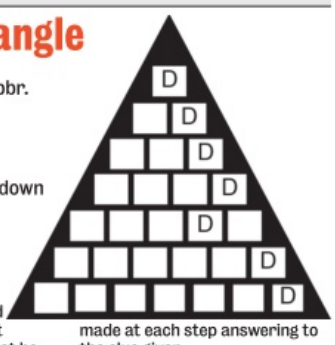
Differences: 1. Hand is moved. 2. Stripe on sleeve is moved. 3. Sleeve is longer. 4. Lampshade is different. 5. Windowpanes are different. 6. Ear is smaller.

Riddler

What advice is shown below?
BEETROOT YEETROOT YOETROOT YOUTROOT YOUR-ROOT YOURSOOT YOURSEOT YOURSELT YOURSELF

Alpha triangle

1 500 in numerals
2 Advertisement, abbr.
3 Boy
4 Set the pace
5 Forest clearing
6 Fell back
7 Worked the price down



Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE

COMICS

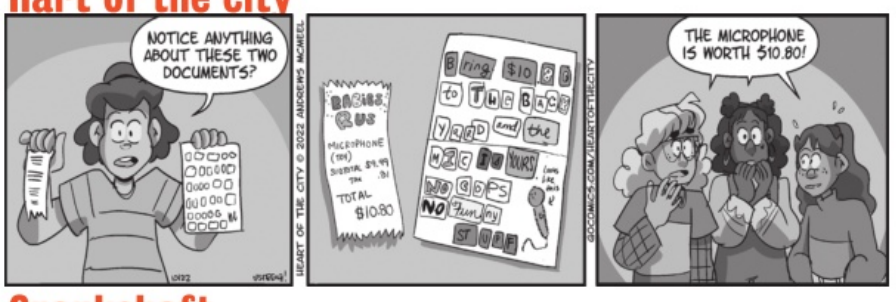
Redeye by Mel Casson

Bizarrotrip

Diamond Lil

HALLOWEEN CANDY DROPS IN FOR A BEER:
HI! I'M A MILK DUD!
A MILK DUD?
THAT'S ME!
WHAT DO YOU DO?
I TASTE DELICIOUS AND THEN YANK YOUR FILLINGS OUT

Hart of the city



Crankshaft

Mutts

WHAT YOUR STARS SAY TODAY

Aries Mar 21 – Apr 20
Today you may be very happy. Your losses may convert to profits. Your boss may be happy and will appreciate your work. You are likely to have some changes in your place or position at work in terms of promotions. You are likely to have control over your opponents and hidden enemies. Lovebirds may take important decisions in terms of marriage with the help of relatives.

Taurus Apr 21 – May 20
Today your moon is positive. Your destiny will help you. You are likely to visit a spiritual place with family or friends. You may plan to donate some money to charity. Property-related deals may likely be done. You may plan for an overseas trip related to work. You may also plan for higher education. You are advised to drink plenty of water to avoid kidney issues.

Gemini May 21 – Jun 21
Today your moon is negative. You may be a victim of conspiracies, so you are advised to avoid being involved in them. You are advised to avoid arguments in your domestic life. You should also avoid rash driving or adventure tours. You may also be attracted to the occult. Those related to research, occult, science, and geology may perform their best.

Cancer Jun 22 – July 23
Today you may be busy at work. You can be energetic, which may speed up your projects. You may be able to take quick decisions, which will increase your business. You are likely to start a new innovation in partnerships. Investments in fixed assets with your business partner is not advised.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23
Today you are blessed by the moon and may perform well at work. You can expect some promotions or transfers in terms of gains. You may also plan to change your current job. Your relationship with your seniors will be strong. Old health issues will be cured now. You are advised to control your eating habits as it may create stomach issues.

Virgo Aug 24 – Sep 23
Today you are blessed by the moon. Things may be under control and you will enjoy it at work. Your focus may be good, which will reflect into your way of working. Your wisdom will help you to go ahead and make difficult decisions in terms of work. Your past investments are likely to give you profits, which may boost your savings. Speculation is advised to be avoided.

Libra Sep 24 – Oct 22
Today you may feel dull. You may be dissatisfied. You may not enjoy your day. You may be a victim of arrogance. It may affect both your professional and domestic life. You may internally feel a lack of confidence, which may stop you from doing something creative at work.

Scorpio Oct 23 – Nov 22
Today you may feel energetic. You may perform efficiently at work. Your hard work may pay you now, which may boost your confidence. Property-related disputes with siblings are likely to be resolved now. Your meeting with an influential person may boost your network. Disputes with your partner may also be resolved.

Sagittarius Nov 23 – Dec 22
Today, you are blessed by the moon, which can make you happy. You will be polite with the people around you. You may take some difficult decisions in business with the help of your family members. You are likely to get a big order with the help of your communication skills, which may grow your business. You are advised to be careful about throat, ear, and eye issues.

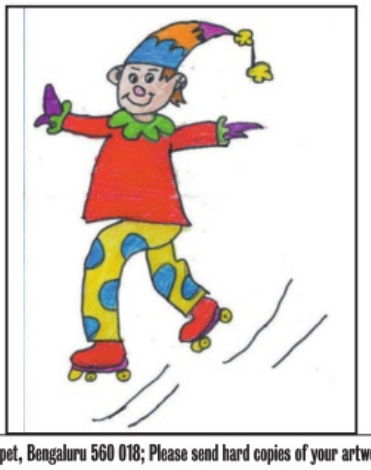
Capricorn Dec 23 – Jan 20
Today you are blessed by the moon and may have good internal strength. You may enjoy it at work. You may enjoy romantic moments with your spouse, which will improve domestic harmony. You are likely to implement new ideas in your family business. Your perfectionism may help you implement plans successfully. Job seekers may find good work.

Aquarius Jan 21 – Feb 19
Today you may be dull and disappointed. You are advised to control your arrogance, otherwise you may face some losses due to your harsh way of speaking with the people around you. Lovebirds should be careful in making discussions on worthless topics as it may be a reason for breakups.

Pisces Feb 20 – Mar 20
Today there may be peace in your mind. You may plan to invest some capital in your business, which may increase liquidity. Your earnings may boost your bank balance. You may enjoy romantic moments with your spouse, which may enhance harmony in the family life. Singles are likely to find a good match. Lovebirds may take decisions to marry.

KIDZONE

Urvisha Goswami, 8 Years, Kensri School



N S Nakshatra, 9 Years, Amara Jyothi Public School

Kidzone, Bangalore Mirror, No.4, KSCCF Compound, Pampa Maha Kavi Road, Chamrajpet, Bengaluru 560 018; Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

SOLUTIONS

SOLVE IN 1M
2x+8=x/2+32
(2)2x+8=(2)x/2+32
4x+16=x+64
4x-x=64-16
3x=48
X=16
2×16+8=40
16/2+32=40

RIDDLER
Be true to yourself.
BEETROOT (sound it out)

BULL'S EYE
arrow, rasp, roar, soap, soar, spar, SPARROW, swap, warp, wasp, wrap

FAST FIVE

A	F	O	O	T
P	O	P	P	A
I	N	T	E	R
A	D	E	P	T
N	U	D	E	S

STRIKE OUT

QUICK

MENSA PUZZLE
PRAISEWORTHY.

QUOTE UNCODE
If you've broken the eggs, you should make the omelette.

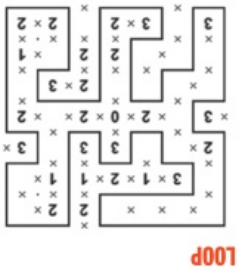
SUDOKU

5	2	3	9	1	7	6	8	4
8	6	7	2	4	5	9	3	1
9	4	1	3	6	8	5	2	7
4	9	8	5	2	3	7	1	6
3	5	2	6	7	1	4	9	8
1	7	6	8	9	4	2	5	3
7	1	9	4	3	2	8	6	5
2	3	5	7	8	6	1	4	9
6	8	4	1	5	9	3	7	2

ALPHA TRIANGLE
D, Ad, Lad, Lead, Glade, Lagged, Haggled.

GO FIGURE
Easy
9 – 5 – 1 + 4 = 7
Medium
9 – 4 x 3 x 1 = 15
Hard
5 x 4 + 6 – 2 = 24

LOOP



KAKURO

Volume No 15, Issue No 131 RNI NO:KARENG/2007/21142 Published for the Proprietors, Metropolitan Media Company Ltd by R.J. Prakashan at No.4, KSCCF Compound, Pampa Maha Kavi Road, Chamrajpet, Bengaluru 560 018 and printed by him at Fourth Estate Ltd, No. 9/10/11-A, 4th Main, Bommasandra Industrial Area, Hosur Road, Bengaluru 560099 (Phones : Press : 080-22899999; Editorial : 080-40877666, Fax – 40877545, Registered Office: No.4, KSCCF Compound, Pampa Maha Kavi Road, Chamarajpet, Bengaluru 560 018. Email : mybangaloremirror@timesgroup.com Editor : Ms. Seena Menon – responsible for selection of news under PRB Act. © Reproduction in whole or in part without the written permission of the Publisher is prohibited.

Star-studded b'day

Bhumi Pednekar shares glimpse from Anil Kapoor's birthday celebration

Bollywood actor Bhumi Pednekar, in the early hours of Sunday, shared a video from actor Anil Kapoor's birthday bash.

Taking to Instagram, Bhumi shared a video on her stories which she captioned, "Happy birthday @anilkapoor sir may your life always be jhakaas."

In the video, Anil could be seen cutting his birthday cake and the crowd can be heard singing the birthday song for the 'Mr India' actor. After cutting his birthday cake, Anil fed the cake to his wife Sunita Kapoor.

Veteran actor Jackie Shroff could be spotted in the background in an olive green jacket. The 'Race' actor hosted a grand birthday party which marked the presence of various Bollywood celebs like Sanjay Kapoor, Khushi Kapoor, Shanaya Kapoor, Jackie Shroff, Farah Khan, Rani Mukerji and many more.

Actor Anil Kapoor was last seen in the family entertainer film 'Jug Jugg Jeeyo' alongside Varun Dhawan, Kiara Advani and Neetu Kapoor.

He will be next seen in an upcoming web series alongside Aditya Roy Kapur, which is an official Hindi remake of the series 'The Night Manager'. He also has Siddharth Anand's next 'Fighter'.

Bhumi, on the other hand, will be next seen in Anubhav Sinha's 'Bheed', Ajay Bahl's 'The Ladykiller', Sudhir Mishra's 'Afwaa', Gauri Khan produced 'Bhakshak', Mudassar Aziz's 'Mere Husband Ki Biwi' and a couple of more unannounced projects. **–ANI**

SANDALWOOD SHOTS

Y MAHESWARA REDDY

Musician & actor

Manikanth Kadri, the son of legendary saxophonist Kadri Gopinath, has completed two decades as a music director in Sandalwood. Manikanth released an instrumental album Dream Journey in 2001. His first movie as a music director was with Malayalam movie Smart City, in 2006.

After successfully scoring music (including background) for around 30 Kannada movies, Manikanth got into acting with Kannada, Telugu, Tulu and Tamil movies such as Pathis Gang, Sri Bharatha Bahubali, Lineman, and Maruthi Nagar Police Station.

"I am trying my luck with acting too. I completed two decades as a music director. The journey in the last two decades has been very beautiful. I have many plans to promote young talent through the Trust established in memory of my late father Kadri Gopinath," said Manikanth.

He said that his father had a dream of making Mangaluru a hub of folk arts and music. "Our objective is not only to provide a platform to encourage the young talent but also create an atmosphere to attract youth towards folk arts and music," he said.

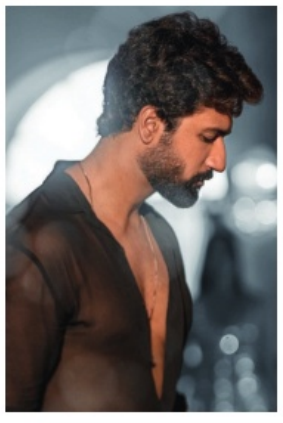
He has scored music for movies like Mr Bachelor, Pentagon, and Lineman. "I am music director for the bilingual (Kannada and Telugu) Lineman and play a key role in it too," he said.

Aiming for a hit with confidence

Milind Manjunath is brimming with confidence about the success of his movie Unlock Raghava. Manjunath debuted in Sandalwood with Weekend that was released in May 2019. His second movie, Raju James Bond is yet to be released.

"Around 90 percent of the shooting of my third movie Unlock Raghava is over. Its climax shoot is in progress at a bungalow near Bannerghatta. I learnt a lot in the last three years. I am lucky to have Rachel David starring opposite me in Unlock Raghava. She has acted in nine movies but has no ego. She guided me during the shooting," said Milind.

He said he is lucky to have a father who stood like a rock behind him. "I have decided to assist my father apart from acting in the movie. I want to do a double role – hero and producer – in the future," he said. He said importance is given to comedy and romance in Unlock Raghava.



You win some, you lose some

Actor Vicky Kaushal is currently the talk of town for his movie Govinda Naam Mera. The 34-year-old, who has earlier picked some hard hitting and serious roles in the past is now enjoying his fun phase where he got a chance to do something more regular and run-of-the-mill.

Recently the Uri actor, in an interview to indianexpress.com opened up on the dismal phase that Bollywood has been seeing in the last few years, in which some big budget and star studded movies have not done well. Opening up on the same, Vicky said that he strongly believes that only good movies are working and that the audience have made their choice very clear. Elaborating further, the Sardar Udham actor quoted the examples of movies like Bhool Bhulaiya 2, RRR and Drishyam 2, saying that none of them fall into a similar genre, yet all of them did so well, since they were all well made movies.

The actor also added that though promotions and marketing are helpful, at the end of the day, it is only good content that sells. Vicky also said that apart from that, even the medium does not matter much since whether it is OTT or the big screen, what has to work will work regardless of that.

The actor will have his plate full vis-à-vis work in 2023. **–ETimes**

Style guru

All the times that actor Ananya Panday showed how to set smouldering style goals

Watch this story come alive on your device by scanning this QR code

Working Christmas

It's a working Christmas for Bollywood actress Nushrratt Bharuccha as she is busy with the shoot of her film "Chhorii 2". The film's team kick-started the shoot for the sequel to the 2021 horror film "Chhorii" a few weeks ago.

Taking to the story section of her Instagram, Nushrratt shared a picture of a clapping board and wrote "A scary Christmas for us!".

The actress earlier received a lot of positive response for "Chhorii" in which she played the role of Meenal, a pregnant woman who starts experiencing paranormal activities.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, she has an interesting lineup of films like "Selfiee" alongside Akshay Kumar and Emraan Hashmi, and "Akelli", which is another solo lead film by the actress. **–IANS**